

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 DOTE-00 FMC-02 SAL-01 CG-00
DLOS-06 OES-06 /048 W
-----241040 025596 /12

P 240830Z FEB 77

FM AMCONSUL ROTTERDAM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2293
INFO AMCONSUL ANTWERP
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMCONSUL AMSTERDAM

UNCLAS ROTTERDAM 118

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB
SUBJECT: STRIKE IN ROTTERDAM HARBOR

BEGIN SUMMARY

1. ALTHOUGH STRIKE IN ROTTERDAM HARBOR CONTINUING CITY
OFFICIALS AND LEADING SHIPPING COMPANIES THINK IT COULD BE
SETTLED BY FEBRUARY 28. HARBOR OPERATING AT 20 PER CENT OF
CAPACITY ON FEBRUARY 23 WITH ABOUT 40 PER CENT OF 13,500 HARBOR
WORKERS ON STRIKE. STRIKE BEGAN FEBRUARY 7 WHEN 859 PORT WORKERS
STRUCK IN SELECTED AREAS. THIS IS FIRST STRIKE OF ANY
IMPORTANCE IN PORT OF ROTTERDAM SINCE 1970. AT PRESENT
THERE ARE ABOUT 13 SHIPS IN NORTH SEA UNCERTAIN ABOUT
CALLING AT ROTTERDAM BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT SURE OF BEING
OFFLOADED AND WHEN STRIKE WILL END. ABOUT 77 SHIPS
HAVE ALREADY GONE TO OTHER NORTH SEA PORTS TO BE DISCHARGED.
MOREOVER, SOME SHIPS, ORIGINALLY DESTINED FOR ROTTERDAM
WERE NOT OFFLOADED AT ANTWERP OR HAMBURG AS A SHOW OF
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SOLIDARITY BY UNIONS IN THOSE PORTS.

END SUMMARY

2. MAIN ISSUE THAT PRESENTLY SEPARATES EMPLOYERS AND WORKERS
IS ONE PER CENT INCREASE IN BASIC WAGES. PORT WORKERS
ALREADY HAVE AGREEMENT FROM EMPLOYERS FOR A ONE PER CENT

INCREASE IN BASIC WAGES RATHER THAN TWO PER CENT DEMANDED BY THEM. PORT WORKERS HAVE ALREADY OBTAINED THEIR FIRST DEMAND WHICH WAS AGREEMENT ON COST OF LIVING INCREASE FOR THE YEAR 1976. ON DIFFERENCE OF ONE PER CENT IN BASIC WAGES BOTH SIDES HAVE DUG IN ADAMANTLY. ON ONE HAND WORKERS FEEL THAT THEY ARE ENTITLED TO AN INCREASE SINCE THEY WISH TO SHARE IN GENERAL PROSPERITY. EMPLOYERS, ON OTHER HAND, HAVE HAD DIFFICULT RECESSION YEAR BEHIND THEM AND FEEL THAT THEY CANNOT AFFORD WAGE INCREASE. ONLY UNION THAT IS PREPARED TO HAVE ITS WORKERS GO BACK TO WORK IS SMALL CHRISTIAN LABOR UNION WHICH HAS RELATIVELY SMALL INFLUENCE.

3. STRIKE IN PORT IS ONLY PART OF NATIONWIDE STRIKE ACTION ON WHICH EMBASSY HAS REPORTED WAFFECTED WIDE VARIETY OF INDUSTRIES INCLUDING BUILDING TRADES, METAL WORKING AND CHEMICALS AND FOOD . PORT AND OTHER WORKERS ON STRIKE ARE RECEIVING 50 GULDERS DAILY FROM FEDERATION OF DUTHC TRADE UNIONS (FNV) IF THEY ARE MEMBERS, AND 35 GULDERS DAILY IF THEY ARE NOT MEMBERS. THIS REPRESENTS CONSIDERABLE DROP IN THEIR AVERAGE DAILY WAGE OF APPROXIMATELY 100 GULDERS.

4. U.S. INTERESTS IN HARBOR, SUCH AS SEALAND, U.S. LINES AND LYKES, OF COURSE, ARE BEING HURT BY THE STRIKE. IN ADDITION TO ONE PER CENT BASIC WAGE INCREASE SEALAND ASSERTED THAT STRIKERS WERE ASKING FOR 33 HOUR WORK WEEK AT PRESENT PAY LEVEL FOR 40 HOUR WEEK AS WELL AS PAY RETROACTIVE TO BEGINNING OF STRIKE PERIOD. THESE DEMANDS NOT LIKELY TO BE AGREED TO BY EMPLOYERS. U.S. ARMY UNCLASSIFIED

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TRANSPORTATION TERMINAL IN ROTTERDAM WHICH CONTROLS U.S. MILITARY SHIPMENT IN TRANSIT FOR U.S.ARMY IN GERMANY HAS HAD 135 CONTAINERS, INCLUDING SOME WITH PERISHABLE GOODS, HELD UP BY STRIKE. ALSO STOPPED BY STRIKE IS SHIPMENT OF COAL FROM U.S. WHICH WAS TO BE OFFLOADED ON BARGES FOR SHIPMENT TO U.S. ARMY IN GERMANY.

5. TOP CITY AND PORT OFFICIALS AND PRINCIPAL SHIPPERS IN PORT ARE EXTREMELY UNHAPPY ABOUT STRIKE. THEY FEAR THAT PORT OF ROTTERDAM MAY LOSE IT REPUTATION FOR GOOD LABOR RELATIONS IF STRIKE LASTS TOO LONG. THEY ALSO FEAR THAT SHIPPERS WILL USE OTHER NORTH SEA PORTS. WITH ONLY ONE PER CENT IN BASIC WAGES SEPARATING EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES FROM AGREEMENT IT DOES NOT APPEAR THAT STRIKE WILL LAST MORE THAN ANOTHER WEEK, SINCE AREA OF DISAGREEMENT IS SO SLIGHT. FURTHER REASON FOR SHORT STRIKE IS THAT PORT WORKERS HAVE HAD THEIR INCOME CUT IN HALF AND EMPLOYERS ARE LOSING AN ESTIMATED FL. 10 MILLION OR 2.5 MILLION DAILY. LABORPARTY WHICH RUNS CITY AND PORT OF ROTTERDAM WOULD

LIKE TO HAVE STRIKE STOPPED BUT CANNOT SAY SO OPENLY
FOR FEAR OF APPEARING PARTIAL TO EITHER EMPLOYERS OR
STRIKERS. THUS, CITY IS UNABLE TO HELP. EMPLOYERS
ORGANIZATION AND UNIONS MEETING AGAIN FEBRUARY 23 TO WORK
ON SETTLEMENT.
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